

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 3, 2005

Senate Concurrent Resolution

No. 46

Introduced by Senator Romero

May 2, 2005

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 46—Relative to the Ruben Salazar Memorial Highway.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 46, as amended, Romero. Ruben Salazar Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a portion of State Highway Route ~~5~~ 710 in the City of Los Angeles as the Ruben Salazar Memorial Highway. The measure would request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost for appropriate signs showing this designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal committee: yes.

1 WHEREAS, Ruben Salazar was born in Ciudad Juarez,
2 Chihuahua, across the Rio Grande from El Paso on March 3,
3 1928. Eleven months later his parents, Luz Chavez and Salvador
4 Salazar, a watch repairman, moved across the river to El Paso,
5 Texas, where Ruben was raised. After high school he entered the
6 United States Army, where he served a two-year tour of duty just
7 before the Korean conflict. Out of the service and now an
8 American citizen, Salazar entered the University of Texas at El
9 Paso (UTEP) and received his Bachelor of Arts in journalism in
10 1954. During his last two years as a student at UTEP he worked
11 as a reporter for the El Paso Herald Post, where he demonstrated
12 both great interest and skill in investigative reporting; and

1 WHEREAS, While working as a reporter at the El Paso Herald
2 Post, he became deeply aware of police mistreatment of
3 Mexicans and wrote extensively on the brutality against
4 Mexican-Americans in Texas prisons. After graduation, Salazar
5 took a job with the Press Democrat in Santa Rosa, California.
6 Three years later, he left the staff of the Press Democrat for a
7 reportorial position with the San Francisco News. Having served
8 his seven years of apprenticeship, in 1959 he moved south as a
9 reporter on the city staff of the Los Angeles Times; and

10 WHEREAS, During his six years at the Los Angeles Times in
11 the city room, he persuaded his superiors to allow him to write a
12 column, sometimes troublesome for the Times, in which he gave
13 voice to the problems and concerns of eastside Chicanos. He
14 continued to give evidence of his ability as reporter, writing a
15 series of articles on the Los Angeles Latino community in 1963,
16 for which he received an award from the California State Fair,
17 the Los Angeles Press Club, and the Equal Opportunity
18 Foundation. In addition to his awards, the series also earned him
19 a well-deserved reputation for conscientious and objective
20 reporting. In 1965, Salazar was sent to cover the civil war in the
21 Dominican Republic, where he described the views of the rebels
22 and the reaction to the U.S. involvement. Later that year, Salazar
23 was sent by the Times to Vietnam as a foreign correspondent to
24 cover the rapidly escalating American involvement there, of
25 special interest to the Latino community because of the
26 proportionately large number of Mexican-Americans in the U.S.
27 forces and among the casualties. He was one of two Times
28 correspondents in Vietnam during the period of increased U.S.
29 involvement; and

30 WHEREAS, In late 1966, Ruben Salazar left Vietnam and was
31 called back by the Times and placed as the bureau chief in
32 Mexico City, thus becoming the first Mexican-American to hold
33 such a position at a major newspaper. He covered stories
34 throughout Latin America including the first conference of the
35 Latin American Solidarity Organization in Cuba in 1967. In
36 1968, he covered a student demonstration in Mexico City when
37 Mexican soldiers opened fire; and

38 WHEREAS, In late 1968, Salazar returned to Los Angeles
39 with a special assignment to cover the Mexican-American
40 community, in which the Chicano movement was beginning to

1 move into high gear. Aware of the increasing importance and
2 rising militancy of Mexican-Americans, in the following year the
3 Times took steps, involving Salazar, to focus more sharply on the
4 Chicano community. In early 1970, he began writing a weekly
5 column featured on the Friday Opinion page explaining and
6 interpreting Chicano life and culture to the greater Los Angeles
7 community; and

8 WHEREAS, In January of 1970, Salazar decided to accept a
9 position as news director of station KMEX-TV and planned to
10 leave the Times. The response of the Times was to suggest that in
11 his new position Salazar continue writing his weekly column. He
12 decided he could handle both jobs and subsequently used both
13 forums to articulate the many grievances that
14 Mexican-Americans had nursed for so long. A political
15 moderate, he nevertheless spoke out fearlessly, condemning
16 racism, prejudice, and segregation. Abuses by the police became
17 the special target of his hard-hitting weekly essays, and he
18 repeatedly pointed out in his column the much higher than
19 average Mexican-American casualty rate in the Vietnam War. As
20 a result of his articles, he was under investigation by the Los
21 Angeles Police Department and the FBI, and pressure was put on
22 him to tone down his language; and

23 WHEREAS, When the National Chicano Moratorium, a
24 committee of Chicanos who opposed the Vietnam War, called a
25 march for August 29, 1970, in Los Angeles, Ruben Salazar
26 naturally was present at the event in his dual capacity.
27 Approximately 20,000 members from all over the United States
28 had gathered to decry the Vietnam War since Chicanos had the
29 highest number of casualties in proportion to their population.
30 With his crew from KMEX he covered the march from
31 Belvedere Park to Laguna Park. As trouble began at a nearby
32 liquor store, it quickly led to a confrontation between the police
33 and marchers, which led to rioting and looting covering 28
34 blocks. The violence led to 200 arrests, 60 injured, and three
35 deaths. As the day grew late into the afternoon, the riot moved
36 east on Whittier Boulevard toward the Silver Dollar Café.
37 Attempting to avoid the riot-ridden streets, Ruben Salazar and his
38 news crew stopped to have a drink in the Silver Dollar Café.
39 Shortly after they entered the Silver Dollar Café, a deputy fired a
40 high-velocity 10-inch tear gas projectile meant for piercing walls,

1 into the café and hit him in the head. Ruben Salazar was killed
2 instantly, suffering a projectile wound of the temple area causing
3 massive injury to the brain. The subsequent 16-day coroner's
4 inquest ruled Salazar's death a homicide, but there was never any
5 legal action; and

6 WHEREAS, Salazar's tragic death was a consequence of the
7 contentious and often racially heated period of time. His
8 informed, articulate, and level-headed voice for social change
9 inspired many in the Latino community and his legacy has
10 encouraged latinos to enter the field of journalism. In 1971 he
11 was posthumously awarded a special Robert F. Kennedy
12 Journalism Award for his columns, which communicated the
13 culture and alienation of Chicanos effectively and
14 compassionately. He received the highest Raza accolade, a
15 corrido describing his contributions to La Raza. Ruben Salazar's
16 life and death has been recognized and honored with awards,
17 scholarships, public schools, and community centers in his name.
18 Most notably, after the controversy of his death had subsided,
19 Laguna Park was renamed Salazar Park in his honor. In July of
20 1976, Salazar was honored by the California State University of
21 Los Angeles in the renaming of South Hall to Ruben Salazar
22 Memorial Hall. On the 10th anniversary of his death, his widow,
23 Sally Salazar, was the guest of honor at the dedication of the
24 Ruben Salazar Library in Santa Rosa, California; now, therefore,
25 be it

26 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
27 *thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby officially*
28 ~~designates that the portion of State Highway Route 5 between~~
29 ~~Ditman Avenue and South Eastern Avenue located in the City of~~
30 *designates that the portion of State Highway Route 710 between*
31 *Cesar Chavez Boulevard and State Highway Route 60 located on*
32 *the City of Los Angeles as the "Ruben Salazar Memorial*
33 *Highway"; and be it further*

34 *Resolved, That the Department of Transportation is requested*
35 *to determine the cost of appropriate signs, consistent with the*
36 *signing requirements for the state highway system, showing this*
37 *special designation, and upon receiving donations from nonstate*
38 *sources sufficient to cover that cost, to erect those signs; and be it*
39 *further*

1 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
2 this resolution to the Department of Transportation and to the
3 author for appropriate distribution.

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